THE BAHÁ'Í MOVEMENT

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AIMS AND PURPOSES OF THE BAHA'I FAITH
OUTLINE OF HISTORY
PRINCIPLES OF ADMINISTRATION
EXCERPTS FROM SACRED WRITINGS
READING LIST

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For Bahá'u'lláh, we should readily recognize, has not only imbued mankind with a new and regenerating Spirit. He has not merely enunciated certain universal principles, or propounded a particular philosophy, however potent, sound and universal these may be. In addition to these, He, as well as "Abdul'l-Bahá after Him, have, unlike the Dispensations of the past, clearly and specifically laid down a set of Laws, established definite institutions, and provided for the essentials of a Divine Economy. These are destined to be a pattern for future society, a supreme instrument for the establishment of the Most Great Peace, and the one agency for the unification of the world, and the proclamation of the reign of righteousness and justice upon the earth.

Leaders of religion, exponents of political theories, governors of human institutions, who at present are witnessing with perplexity and dismay the bankruptcy of their ideas, and the disintegration of their handiwork, would do well to turn their gaze to the Revelation of Bahá-'u'lláh, and to meditate upon the World Order which, lying enshrined in His teachings, is slowly and imperceptibly rising amid the welter and chaos of present day civilisation. They need have no doubt or anxiety regarding the nature, the origin, or a validity of the institutions which the adherents of the Faith are building up throughout the world. For these lie imbedded in the teachings themselves, unadulterated and unobscured by unwarrantable inferences, or unauthorised interpretations of His Word.

Shoghi Effendi.

AIMS AND PURPOSES OF THE BAHA'I FAITH

A GENERATION before modern science and industry had forged strong links of physical unity between the nations, a movement based upon the spiritual principle of human oneness had been established in Persia and the Near East by Bahá'u'lláh, founder of the Bahá'í Faith. Considered by contemporary historians of Europe as merely a Movement confined to Muhammadanism, and eventually to subside after the manner of countless periodical reform programmes, the universal character of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh has been gradually revealed throughout eighty years of bitter persecution, until today it enjoys the status of an independent religion throughout practically the entire Muslim world. Its vitality in Christian and other non-Muslim societies also serves to call attention to the fact that the Bahá'í teachings correspond to a fundamental need of humanity in the present era.

The aims and purposes of the Bahá'í Cause, students of the teachings point out, can never be fully understood merely by comparison with other religious or ethical systems in their present form. The unique contribution made by Bahá'u'lláh to the cause of world brotherhood and peace, according to His followers, consists in the fact that Bahá'u'lláh restored the spirit of religion at its very source.

His aim and purpose was not to remedy minor evils of modern society but to create a new and positive world outlook.

The Bahá'í teachings, in fact, are said to meet the needs of humanity today for the reason that Bahá'u'lláh stands in that line of mighty prophetic beings who alone have been able to see into the depths of the human heart and by the power of their lives and gospel supply a new impulse to civilisation as a whole. The Bahá'ís begin, therefore, by accepting the spiritual oneness of all the prophets and their mutual consecration to the same task of leading men from darkness to light. The fact that every civilisation has emanated from the sources of spiritual energy and knowledge revealed by a prophet, and that all the prophets came to the world at the hour when a once glorious civilisation was at the point of decay, is the proof offered by Bahá'ís to vindicate the supreme power of religion as manifested by its great Founders from age to age.

The mission of Bahá'u'llah, likewise, His followers declare, was to renew man's faith in the universality of God at a time when unfaith and moral and political decadence are running their full course not in one part of the world, or among one race alone, but equally in East and West. The sign of decadence emphasized by the Bahá'ís is conflict and strife among human beings—religious strife, class strife and racial strife no less than military or economical conflict on international scale. That present-day civilisation, for all its mental activity and its scientific

marvels, cannot survive its own forces of disunity without reinforcement by a new, world-wide faith, expressive of a regenerated mankind and a higher type of social organism, is the Bahá'í claim in explaining the significance of this Cause.

From Bahá'u'lláh, the believers declare, has been reflected once more the rays of that Holy Spirit by which Christianity and other divinely revealed religions came into being to sustain the burden of a collapsing age. Partaking of this spiritual reality in the form of the inspired teachings of Bahá'u'lláh—man's privilege of approach to the will of God—the individual soul is healed of the disease of prejudice, fear and hate, and transformed from petty concerns and local loyalties into a consciousness of an underlying brotherhood swiftly replacing the antagonisms inherited from the dead past.

The wars and strifes shaking the world today, according to the Bahá'ís serve to awaken people to the unreality of manmade dogmas and creeds, the source of all antagonistic institutions and destructive customs, and quicken in them a hunger for a reality raised above human will in the realms of the divine. Thus the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh have spread not merely because they renew hope and inspire enthusiasm, but because also they uphold a world order as the end and aim of human evolution in this new age. The sciences and arts they bring back into the heart of human experience by showing them to be the true modes of religious worship; the functions of government are en-

nobled as the union of morality and social usefulness; and democracy is vitalised by the realisation that all men are children of the one God.

The Baha'i Principles

The public education which fills the mind with facts, however true and useful, but leaves old, destructive prejudices in the heart, must be augmented by the addition of spiritual principles, members of the Bahá'í Cause point out, if the peril of world failure through international war and class revolution is ever to be removed.

In the principles of individual and social regeneration laid down by Bahá'u'lláh over eighty years ago, this spiritual element, according to the Bahá'í, exists in a form so pure, so complete and so positively forceful that devoted groups of students assemble in cities and villages in Europe, the Orient and America at the present time for the sole purpose of reinforcing their intellectual education with the moral power and nobility emanating from the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. American Bahá'ís who have travelled extensively and visited these groups in various parts of the world state that the result of this new spiritual knowledge has been to eliminate, among large numbers of believers, the evils of the caste system in India, religious prejudice in Persia and the Near East, racial and national antagonisms in Europe, while in the United States and Canada the Bahá'í teachings have been especially fruitful in removing prejudice between the white and coloured peoples.

To summarise and outline the spiritual verities revealed by Bahá'u'lláh' one may begin by quoting the following words uttered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá' the great Exemplar of the Bahá'í Faith; "*This is a new cycle of human power. . . . The gift of God to this enlightened age is knowledge of the oneness of mankind and of the fundamental unity of religions.*"

The conviction that humanity has entered upon a new era, when the latent possibilities of men and women are to be fully expressed by the gradual developments of a world community reflecting the ideals of all the prophets; and the sciences and arts shall flower gloriously under the inspiration of mutual fellowship and trust; is a distinguishing characteristic of the Bahá'í message. Since every child is born without innate prejudice, the organised hates and fears of mankind are acquired from the attitude of those who control youth. By replacing the present mental environment with a psychology upholding the power of love, the Bahá'ís assert, a new generation will come into being free of the baneful influence of hostility and antagonism. The decisive point in spiritual education, according to followers of Bahá'u'lláh, consists in realising that the founders of all the revealed religions were actuated by the same purpose and reflected the same divine power. When agreement exists on this principle, the very roots of prejudice are destroyed, for aside from the influence of the prophets there is no social force able to overcome the animal status of man by connecting him with the providence of God.

Bahá'ís, therefore, practise the lesson of regarding all others, irrespective, of race, class, nation or creed, as expressions of the one creative, universal love. The teachings of Bahá'ulláh reinforce this truth by proving from recorded history that faith in a prophet has ever produced the social community out of which nations and races are afterward derived, and that it is the inhumanity caused by religious hostility which later gives destructive force to national, racial and class divisions. A new and world wide spiritual movement is needed at this time, Bahá'ís believe, in order to give men the sense of community in obedience to the divine Will and raise them above the destructive darkness lingering in traditional views.

Upon the basis of this new and broader outlook, the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh raise a mighty edifice of social regeneration, the pillars of which are the following organic principles; the harmony of true science and religion; the spiritual equality of man and woman; the education of all people in terms of the complete personality—including adequate training in a trade or profession and moral culture, as well as mental discipline and knowledge; the continuance of education throughout life by unceasing open-minded search for truth; social responsibility for every individual's economic well-being; the addition of a universal secondary language to school curriculums; the spiritual obligation of every government to make world peace its first and most important concern; and the organisation of an international tribunal capable of maintaining world

order based upon equal justice to the various nations and peoples.

The Bahá'í teachings, it is said, differ from the liberal philosophies of the day by making personal development absolutely contingent upon social usefulness and co-operation. They meet the egoistic longing for an independent, individual "perfection" or "blessedness" by enunciating the sound psychological principle that, because all human beings are inter-dependent, fulfilment comes only to him who seeks satisfaction in mutual rather than selfish good. Bahá'u'lláh, His followers declare, has revivified the teaching of love revealed by all the prophets, and supplemented this doctrine by new teachings which reveal the nature of the world order which humanity needs supremely at this time.

Outline of Baha'i History

The beginnings of the "modern" age—marked by industrialism in the West and the stirrings of political reform in the East—can be completely explained, according to followers of the Bahá'í Cause, only by reference to the spiritual enlightenment which dawned upon the world over eighty years ago through the universal message of Bahá'u'lláh. In this message, which Bahá'ís feel is only not being fully understood and appreciated, a programme for true human progress was laid down by which the aspirations and hopes of Christians, Jews and other religionists for world peace and righteousness will be vindicated and fulfilled.

The history of the Bahá'í Cause, its members assert, is the outward and visible evidence that humanity in this age has been stirred by a new spirit, the effect of which is to break the bonds and limitations of the past and remould the world in a universal civilization based upon knowledge of divine reality.

On May 23, 1844, a radiant youth of Persia known as the Báb ("The Gate") proclaimed His mission of heralding a mighty Educator who would quicken the souls, illumine the minds, harmonise the consciences and exalt the habits and customs of mankind. After six years of heroic steadfastness and ardent teaching, in the face of the combined opposition of Church and State in His native land, the Báb fell a victim of fanatical persecution and was publicly martyred by a military firing squad at Tabriz, Persia, July 9, 1850, leaving behind Him among the Persian people such loyalty and faith that thousands of His followers underwent martyrdom rather than recant and forsake their devotion to the Báb's assurance that the day of the Promised One had at last dawned.

Upon this preparation the foundation of the Cause was laid by Bahá'u'lláh ("Glory of God"), whose enlightened principles of personal and social regeneration were revealed under conditions of cruel oppression, extending through a period of more than forty years, unequalled in the annals of religion.

Bahá'u'lláh, a majestic personage whose greatness was felt and admitted even by His bitterest foes, gave the glad-

tidings to East and West, that the Holy Spirit was once again manifest in the image of man to revivify humanity in its hour of supreme need, that a new and greater cycle of human power had begun—the age of brotherhood of peace, of spiritual love. All peoples He summoned to partake of the knowledge of reality uttered through Him. The dire sufferings to fall upon mankind through international war and rebellious unrest until the lessons of unity had been learned, were clearly foretold. The message of Bahá'u'lláh was revealed in the form of books dictated to secretaries during days of exile and imprisonment, and in letters addressed to kings and rulers, and to the heads of religions, in Europe, the Orient and the United States.

As the desperate forces of reaction gathered against Him, the ecclesiastical and civil authorities of Persia realizing that their influence would be destroyed by the spread of the enlightened teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, He and His little band of faithful followers were imprisoned in Tihrán, stripped of property and rights, exiled to Baghdád; to Constantinople, to Adrianople, and at last, as the supreme infliction, in 1868, confined for life in the desolate barracks of Akká, a Turkish penal colony, near Mount Carmel in the Holy Land. Scarcely fifty years later, as the Bahá'ís point out, those responsible for the exile and imprisonment of Bahá'u'lláh—the Sháh of Persia, and the Sultán and Caliph in Constantinople—were themselves abjectly hurled from power.

Voluntarily sharing these ordeals from very childhood was the eldest son of Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá ("Servant

of Bahá"), whose confinement at 'Akká, lasting forty years, was terminated in 1908 by the Turkish Revolution initiated by the Young Turk Party.

Bahá'ulláh left this life in 1892. From then until His own ascension in 1921, 'Abdul'l-Bahá served the Cause as its appointed Exemplar and Interpreter, and through His unique devotion, purity of life, tireless effort, and unfailing wisdom, the Bahá'í message slowly but surely penetrated to all parts of the world. To-day, Bahá.í centers exist in most countries, and the membership of the movement embraces practically every nationality, class and creed. At the present time the unity of the Bahá'ís and the integrity of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is maintained by Shoghi Effendi, grandson of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and in His Will and Testament appointed Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith.

The Baha'i Teachings and Universal Peace

The secret of universal peace has not only been found but made to work in actual practice, followers of Bahá'ull'áh assert, throughout a large and rapidly growing spiritual community with established centers in every part of the world. The universal peace obtaining among the Bahá'ís of the Orient, Europe and America, establishes the perfect model by which the various nations and peoples can raise the true world peace on enduring foundations. In the application of the principles enunciated by Bahá'u'lláh, world peace is reinforced by spiritual truths and given religious sanction without disregarding the part that must be played by political and economic considerations.

The Bahá'í Cause, in fact, made the question of peace the supreme issue more than sixty years ago, before the subject had been seriously considered by existing rulers and churches. In a series of letters addressed to kings and heads of government in Europe, Asia and the United States, written in 1868, 1869 and 1870 Bahá'u'lláh proclaimed that the era of international order had dawned, and called upon the reigning rulers to assemble and take steps to eliminate the possibilities of future war. He expressed the profound truth that service to the ideal of peace was not merely an attitude of political wisdom, but obedience to God, and continued irresponsibility and unfaithfulness to the right of the peoples to live in peace would produce international strife and anarchy so widespread that every reactionary rēgime would be destroyed.

Following in the footsteps of Bahá'u'lláh, his son 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Exemplar of the new Faith, consecrated his life to the ideal of unity, and from 1911 to 1913, on the eve of the great war, travelled throughout Europe and America in order to bring the principles of peace directly to the people. Speaking at Stanford University, California, in 1912, 'Abdul'l-Bahá definitely predicted the outbreak of international conflict in the imminent future, calling upon the American people to arise as pioneers of universal peace.

In the Bahá'í teachings, universal peace is far more than absence of military conflict. It embodies also peace between the religions, peace between the races and peace between the classes of mankind,. Universal peace, according to these teachings, can only come into being as the roots

of all antagonism, prejudice, strife and competition are removed from the hearts of men, and his transformation of attitude and action in turn depends upon devotion to the divine Will. The development of believers in so many parts of the world, who accept the equality and fundamental unity of all religions and races, stands as the most vital proof that the spirit of religion has been renewed in this age.

But the Bahá'í Cause represents far more than merely a new attitude of friendliness and amity among groups of people; it is pointed out by students of the teachings that Bahá'u'lláh also created an organic and structural unity capable of relating the religious and humanitarian activities of Bahá'ís throughout the world. The Bahá'í Cause is to-day functioning as a body in accordance with this organic unity, which co-ordinates local, national and international units in one harmonious whole. Stressing above all the spiritual character of this Cause, and its rigid and uncompromising insistence upon loyalty of all believers to their own government, the Bahá'í Cause at the same time provides order and purpose for that sphere of effort and action wherein all individuals are left legitimately free to co-operate with others for spiritual and ideal ends. A movement which can thus unify Christians, Muhammadans, Jews, Zoroastrians and other religionists—which in its own membership can subdue racial and class prejudice, and applies the principles of democracy to the election of local, national and international assembles—is, its members live, a true application of the ideal of universal peace meriting the study of all who realise that peace cannot

be attained merely by treaty and pact between armed governments all subject to conflicting influences from their own citizens. The "moral equivalent" of a true League of Nations and a World Court, Bahá'ís point out, has been created by the power of love manifest in Bahá'u'lláh and made evident in teachings accepted as prophetic by His followers in all lands.

The warning uttered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá at Haifa in 1921, His last year on earth, was that class dissension would continue to develop in all countries, and become a sinister menace to civilisation, until the nations sincerely sought to establish universal peace. The Bahá'í peace programme was defined by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in a letter written to the members of the Central Organisation for a Durable Peace, The Hague, in 1919. Many years earlier He wrote the following significant words: "*True civilisation will unfurl its banner in the midmost heart of the world whenever a certain number of distinguished Sovereigns of lofty aims—the shining exemplars of devotion and determination—shall, for the good and happiness of all mankind, arise with a firm resolve and clear vision to establish the cause of Universal Peace. . . . The fundamental principle underlying this solemn Agreement should be so fixed that if one of the governments of the world should later violate any of its provisions, all the governments on earth would arise to reduce it to utter submission.*"

PRINCIPLES OF ADMINISTRATION

IT has been the general characteristic of religion that organisation marks the interruption of the true spiritual influence and serves to prevent the original impulse from being carried into the world. The organisation has invariably become a substitute for religion rather than a method or an instrument used to give the religion effect. The separation of peoples into different traditions unbridged by any peaceful or constructive intercourse has made this inevitable. Up to the present time in fact, no Founder of a revealed religion has explicitly laid down the principles that should guide the administrative machinery of the Faith He has established.

In the Bahá'í Cause, the principles of world administration were expressed by Bahá'u'lláh, and these principles were developed in the writings of 'Adbu'l-Bahá, more especially in His *Will and Testament.*

The purpose of this organization is to make possible a true and lasting unity among people of different races, classes, interests, characters, and inherited creeds. A close and sympathetic study of this aspect of the Bahá'í Cause will show that the purpose and method of Bahá'í administration is so perfectly adapted to the fundamental spirit of the Revelation that it bears to it the same relationship as body to soul. In character, the principles of Bahá'í administration represent the science

of co-operation; in application, they provide for a new and higher type of morality world-wide in scope. In the clash and confusion of sectarian prejudice, the Bahá'í Movement is impartial and sympathetic, offering a foundation upon which reconciliation can be firmly based. Amid the complex inter-relations of governments, the Movement stands absolutely neutral as to political purposes and entirely obedient to all recognised authority. It will not be overlooked by the student that Bahá'u'lláh is the only religious teacher making obedience to just governments and rulers a definite spiritual command.

In this brief analysis of the several features of the Bahá'i system of administration the purpose is not only to place in the hands of the believers themselves a convenient summary of the available instructions but also to clarify this aspect of the Movement to the non-Bahá'í. After one has made contact with the spirit of the Bahá'í teachings and desires to co-operate whole-heartedly with their purpose, the administrative phase of the Movement reveals profound significance.

At the time of the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the organisation was fully defined but not yet established among His followers. The responsibility for carrying out the instructions was placed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá upon His grandson, Shoghi Effendi, to whom was assigned the function of "Guardian of the Cause." Obedience to the authority of the Guardian was definitely enjoined upon all Bahá'ís by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, but this authority carries with it nothing of an arbitrary or personal character, being limited as to

purpose and method by the writings of Bahá'u'-lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The Guardian unifies the efforts to bring into complete application those principles of world administration already clearly defined.

To assist the Guardian in his manifold responsibilities and duties and particularly in the promotion of the teaching work, 'Abdu'l-Bahá provided for the appointment of a group of co-workers to be known as "The Hands of the Cause of God." The appointment of this body is a function of the Guardian, and these from their own number are to elect nine persons who will be closely associated with the Guardian in the discharge of his duties. It is the function of the Guardian also to appoint his own successor, this appointment to be ratified by the nine Hands of the Cause.

It is the genius of the Bahá'í Cause that the principle underlying the administration of its affairs aims to improve the life and upbuild the character of the individual believer in his own local community, wherever it may be, and not to enhance the prestige of those relatively few who, by election or appointment, hold positions of higher authority. Bahá'í authority is measured by self-sacrifice and not by arbitrary power. This fundamental aim can be seen clearly on studying the significant emphasis which 'Abdu'l-Bahá placed upon the local Bahá'í community. The local group, involving as it does men and women in all the normal activities and relations of life, is the foundation upon which rests the entire evolution of the Cause. The local Bahá'í community is given

official recognition only after its number of adult declared believers has become nine or more. Up to this point, the community exists as a voluntary group of workers and students of the Cause.

In this connection, the world "community" is not used in the sense of any locality, exclusively Bahá'í in membership, nor of any manner of living differing outwardly from the general environment, such as has been attempted by religionists and also members of philosophic and economic movements in the past. A Bahá'í community is a unity of minds and hearts, an association of people entirely voluntary in character, established upon a common experience of devotion to the universal aims of Bahá'u'lláh and agreement as to the methods by which these aims can be advanced.

A Bahá'í community differs from other voluntary gatherings in that its foundation is so deeply laid and broadly extended that it can include any sincere soul. Whereas other associations are exclusive, in effect if not in intention, and from method if not from ideal, Bahá'í association is inclusive, shutting the gates of fellowship to no sincere soul. In every gathering there is latent or developed some basis of selection. In religion this basis is a creed limited by the historical nature of its origin; in politics this is party or platform; in economics this is a mutual misfortune or mutual power; in the arts and sciences this basis consists of special training or activity or interest. In all these matters, the more exclusive the basis

of selection, the stronger the movement—a condition diametrically opposed to that existing in the Bahá'í Cause. Hence the Cause, for all its spirit of growth and progress, develops slowly as regards the numbers of its active adherents. For people are accustomed to exclusiveness and division in all affairs. The important sanctions have ever been warrants and justifications of division. To enter the Bahá'í Movement is to leave these sanctions behind an experience which at first invariably exposes one to new trials and sufferings, as the human ego revolts against the supreme sanction of universal love. The scientific must associate with the simple and unlearned; the rich with the poor, the white with the coloured, the mystic with the literalist, the Christian with the Jew, the Muslim with the Parsee; and on terms removing the advantage of long established presumptions and privileges.

But for this difficult experience there are glorious compensations. Let us remember that art grows sterile as it turns away from the common humanity, that philosophy likewise loses its vision when developed in solitude, and that politics and religion never succeed apart from the general needs of mankind. Human nature is not yet known, for we have all lived in a state of mental, moral, emotional or social defence, and the psychology of defence is the psychology of inhibition. But the love of God removes fear; the removal of fear establishes the latent powers, and association with others in spiritual love brings these powers into

vital, positive expression. A Bahá'í community is a gathering where this process can take place in this age, slowly at first, as the new impetus gathers force, more rapidly as the members become conscious of the powers unfolding the flower of unity among men.

Where the community is small and insignificant, in comparison with the population of the city or town, the first condition of growth is understanding of the Manifestation of Bahá'u'lláh, and the next condition is that of true humility. If these two conditions exist, the weakest soul becomes endowed with effective power in service to the Cause. The result of unity, in fact, is to share the powers and faculties of all with each.

The responsibility for and supervision of local Bahá'í affairs is vested in a body known as the Spiritual Assembly. This body (limited to nine members) is elected annually on April 21st, the first day of Ridván (the Festival commemorating the Declaration of Bahá'u'lláh) by the adult declared believers of the community, the voting list being drawn up by the outgoing Spiritual Assembly. Concerning the character and functions of this body, 'Abdu'l-Bahá has written as follows;

"It is incumbent upon everyone (every believer) not to take any step (of Bahá'í activity) without consulting the Spiritual Assembly, and they must assuredly obey with heart and soul its bidding and be submissive unto it, that things may be properly ordered and well arranged.

Otherwise every person will act independently and after his own judgment, will follow his own desire, and do harm to the Cause.

"The prime requisites for them that take counsel together are purity of motive, radiance of spirit, detachment from all else save God, attraction to His divine fragrance, humility and lowliness amongst His loved ones, patience and long-suffering in difficulties and servitude to His exalted Threshold. Should they be graciously aided to acquire these attributes, victory from the unseen Kingdom of Bahá'i shall be vouchsafed to them. In this day, Assemblies of consultation are of the greatest importance and a vital necessity. Obedience unto them is essential and obligatory. The members thereof must take counsel together in such wise that no occasion for ill-feeling or discord may arise. This can be attained when every member expresses with absolute freedom his own opinion and setteth forth his argument. Should anyone oppose, he must on no account feel hurt, for not until matters are fully discussed can the right way be revealed. The shining spark of truth cometh forth only after the clash of differing opinions. If after discussion a decision be carried unanimously, well and good; but if, the Lord forbid, differences of opinion should arise, a majority of voices must prevail.

"The first condition is absolute love and harmony amongst the members of the Assembly. They must be wholly free from estrangement and must manifest in

themselves the Unity of God, for they are the waves of one sea, the drops of one river, the stars of one heaven, the rays of one sun, the trees of one orchard, the flowers of one garden. Should harmony of thought and absolute unity be non-existent, that gathering shall be dispersed and that Assembly be brought to naught.

"The second condition: They must when coming together turn their faces to the Kingdom on high and ask aid from the realm of Glory. . .Discussions must all be confined to spiritual matters that pertain to the training of souls, the instruction of children, the relief of the poor, the help of the feeble throughout all classes in the world, kindness to all peoples, the diffusion of the fragrances of God and the exaltation of His Holy Word. Should they endeavour to fulfil these conditions the grace of the Holy spirit shall be vouchsafed unto them and that Assembly shall become the centre of the divine blessings, the hosts of divine confirmation shall come to their aid, and they shall day by day receive a new effusion of spirit."

The letters of Shoghi Effendi quote the fundamental instructions contained in the writings of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá on the character of Bahá'í administration, and give them definite application: " A careful study of Bahá'ull'áh's and 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Tablets will reveal that other duties (besides teaching the Cause), no less vital to the interests of the Cause, devolve upon the elected representatives of the friends in every locality.

"They must endeavour to promote amity and concord amongst the friends and secure an active and whole-hearted co-operation for the service of the Cause.

"They must do their utmost to extend at all times the helping hand to the poor, the sick, the disabled, the orphan, the widow, irrespective of colour, caste and creed.

"They must promote by every means in their power the material as well as spiritual enlightenment of youth, the means for the education of children; institute, whenever possible, Bahá'í educational institutions; organise and supervise their work, and provide the best means for their progress and development.

"They must make an effort to maintain official, regular and frequent correspondence with the various Bahá'i centers throughout the world, report to them their activities, and share the glad-tidings they receive with all their fellow-workers in the Cause.

"They must bend every effort to promote the interests of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár (*i.e.*, House of Worship), *and hasten the day when the work of this glorious Edifice† will have been consummated.

"They must encourage and stimulate by every means at their command, through subscriptions, reports and articles, the development of the various Bahá'í magazines.

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* Referring particularly to Spiritual Assemblies in America.

† On the shore of Lake Michigan.

"They must undertake the arrangement of the regular meetings of the friends, the feasts and anniversaries, as well as the special gatherings designed to serve and promote the social, intellectual and spiritual interests of their fellowmen.

"They must supervise in these days when the Cause is still in its infancy all Bahá'í publications and translations, and provide in general for a dignified and accurate presentation of all Bahá'í literature and its distribution to the general public.

"These rank among the most outstanding obligations of the members of every Spiritual Assembly. In whatever locality the Cause has sufficiently expanded, and in order to insure efficiency and avoid confusion, each of these manifold functions will have to be referred to a special Committee, responsible to that Assembly, elected by it from among the friends in that locality, and upon whose work the Assembly will have to exercise constant and general supervision.

"In every locality, be it city or hamlet, where the number of adult declared believers exceed nine, a local Spiritual Assembly must be forthwith established.

"As the progress and extension of spiritual activities is dependent and conditioned upon material means, it is of absolute necessity that immediately after the establishment of local as well as national Spiritual Assemblies, a Bahá'í Fund be established, to be placed under the ex-

clusive control of the Spiritual Assembly. All donations and contributions should be offered to the Treasurer of the Assembly, for the express purpose of promoting the interests of the Cause throughout that locality or country. It is the sacred obligation of every conscientious and faithful servant of Bahá'u'lláh, who desires to see His Cause advance, to contribute freely and generously for the increase of that Fund. The members of the Spiritual Assembly will at their own discretion expend it to promote the teaching campaign, to help the needy, to establish educational Bahá'í institutions, to extend in every way their sphere of service.

"Full harmony, however, as well as co-operation among the various local Assemblies and the members themselves, and particularly between each Assembly and the National Body is of the utmost importance, for upon it depends the unity of the Cuase of God, the solidarity of the friends, the full, speedy and efficient working of the spiritual activities of His loved ones.

"The various Assemblies, local and national, constitute today the bedrock upon the strength of which the Universal House (of Justice) is in future to be firmly established and raised. Not until these function vigorously and harmoniously can the hope for the termination of this period of transition be realised. . .Bear in mind that the keynote of the Cause of God is not dictatorial authority, but humble, fellowship; not arbitrary power, but the spirit of frank and loving consultation. Nothing short of the spirit

of a true Bahá'í can hope to reconcile the principle of mercy and justice, of freedom and submission, of the sanctity of the right of the individual and of self-surrender, of vigilance, discretion and prudence on the one hand, and fellowship, candour, and courage on the other."

Experience in the life of a Bahá'í community and participation in the details of its several activities impresses one with the fact that Bahá'í unity has in it new elements which work powerfully to expand one's area of sympathy, deepen one's insight, develop one's character and bring order and stability into all of one's affairs. There can be no higher privilege than the experience of attempting to serve faithfully upon a Spiritual Assembly, conscious and its members are of the unique standard upheld by 'Abdu'l-Bahá and bringing as it does the opportunity of dealing with a large range and diversity of human problems from an impersonal point of view. It is inevitable that the nine elected members shall exemplify diverse interests and types of character, with the result that unity of heart and conscience with the other eight members is a direct training to enter into spiritual unity with the larger body of mankind. No such schools of discipline and inspiration exist on earth today for one must bear in mind that a Bahá'í community can never be an exclusive group nor a closed circle of interests, but, on the contrary, its fundamental purpose is to unify and co-operate with every possible element in the surrounding population.

Since a Spiritual Assembly is established upon a new and higher ideal, the character, knowledge and purity of

its members is essential to success. Wherever personal ambition, narrowness or impurity enters a Spiritual Assembly, the results are invariably to check the growth of the Cause, and, if these conditions are prolonged to destroy the foundation already laid. The careful student of the teachings will accept this result as one more vindication of the all-surrounding spirit protecting this Faith. The elimination of an unworthy group from the Bahá'í Cause would be a bitter disappointment but not an evidence that the Cause had failed. On the contrary, the Cause could only be declared a failure if personal ambition, pride, narrowness and impurity should so prevail as to build a world-wide organisation able to pervert the original purpose.

The local Spiritual Assemblies of a country are linked together and co-ordinated through another elected body of nine members, the National Spiritual Assembly. This body comes into being by means of an annual election held by elected delegates representing the local Bahá'í communities.

The relation of the National Spiritual Assembly to the local Spiritual Assemblies and to the body of the believers the country is thus defined in the letters of the Guardian of the Cause:

"Regarding the establishment of National Assemblies, it is of vital importance that in every country, where the conditions are favourable and the number of the friends has grown and reached a considerable size—that a National Spiritual Assembly be immediately established, representative of the friends throughout that country.

"Its immediate purpose is to stimulate, unify and co-ordinate, by frequent personal consultations, the manifold activities of the friends as well as the local Assemblies; and by keeping in close and constant touch with the Holy Land, initiate measures, and direct in general the affairs of the Cause in that country.

"It serves also another purpose, no less essential than the first, as in the course of time it shall evolve into the National House of Justice (referred to in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's *Will* as the 'Secondary House of Justice') which according to the explicit text of the *Testament* will have, in conjunction with the other National Assemblies throughout the Bahá'í world, to elect directly the members of the International or Universal House of Justice, that Supreme Council that will guide, organize and unify the affairs of the Movement throughout the world.

"This National Spiritual Assembly which, pending the establishment of the Universal House of Justice, will have to be re-elected once a year, obviously assumes grave responsibilities for it has to exercise full authority over all the local Assemblies in its province, and will have to direct the activities of the friends, guard vigilantly the Cause of God, and control and supervise the affairs of the Movement in general.

"Vital issues, affecting the interest of the Cause in that country, such as the matter of translation and publication the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, the teaching work, and other

similar matters that stand distinct from strictly local affairs, must be under the full jurisdiction of the National Assembly.

"It is the bounden duty, in the interest of the Cause we all love and serve, of the members of the incoming National Assembly, once elected by the delegates at Convention time, to seek and have the utmost regard, individually as well as collectively, for the advice, the considered opinion and the true sentiments of the assembled delegates. Banishing every vestige of secrecy, of undue reticence, of dictorial aloofness from their midst they should radiantly and abundantly unfold to the eyes of the delegates by whom they were elected, their plans, their hopes and their cares. They should familiarise the delegates with the various matters that will have to be considered in the current year, and clamly and conscientiously study and weigh the opinions and judgments of the delegates. The newly elected National Assembly, during the few days when the Convention is in session, and after the dispersion of the delegates, should seek ways and means to cultivate understanding, facilitate and maintain the exchange of views, deepen confidence, and vindicate by every tangible evidence their one desire to serve and advance the commonweal.

Concerning the matter of drawing up the voting list to be used at the annual local Bahá'í elections, the responsibility for this is placed upon each local Spiritual Assembly, and as a guidance in the matter the Guardian has written the following:

"To state very briefly and as adequately as present circumstances permit, the principal factors that must be taken into consideration before deciding whether a person may be regarded as a true believer or not: Full recognition of the station of the Fore-runner, the Author and the True Exemplar of the Bahá'í Cause, as set forth in '*Abdu'l-Baha's Will and Testament;* unreserved acceptance of a submission to whatsoever has been revealed by their Pen; loyal and steadfast adherence to every clause of our Beloved's sacred *Will;* and close association with the spirit as well as the form of the present-day Bahá'í administration—these I conceive to be the fundamental and primary considerations that must be fairly discreetly and thoughtfully ascertained before reaching such a vital decision."

'Abdul'-Bahá's instructions provided for the further development of Bahá'í organisation through an International Spiritual Assembly to be elected by the members of the National Spiritual Assemblies. This international body has not yet come into existence, but its special character has been clearly defined:

"And now, concerning the Assembly (Baytu'l-'Adl : *i.e.,* House of Justice) which God hath ordained as the source of all good and free from all error, it must be elected by universal suffrage, that is, by the believers. Its members must be manifestations of the fear of God, and day-springs of knowledge and understanding, must be steadfast in God's Faith, and the well-wishers of all mankind. By this Assembly is meant the Universal Assembly; that is, in

each country a secondary Assembly must be instituted, and these secondary Assemblies must elect the members of the Universal one.

"Unto this body all things must be referred. It enacteth all ordinances and regulations that are not to be found in the explicit Holy Text. By this body all the difficult problems are to be resolved, and the Guardian of the Cause is its sacred head and the distinguished member, for life, of that body. Should he not attend in person its deliberations, he must appoint one to represent him. . . . This Assembly enacteth the laws and the executive enforceth them. The legislative body must reinforce the executive must aid and assist the legislative body, so that, through the close union and harmony of these two forces, the foundation of fairness and justice may become firm and strong, that all the regions of the world may become even as Paradise itself.

"Unto the *Most Holy Book* everyone must turn, and all that is not expressly recorded therein must be referred to the Universal Assembly. That which this body, either unanimously or by a majority, doth carry, that is verily the truth and the purpose of God Himself. Whoso doth deviate therefrom is verily of them that love discord, hath shown forth malice and turned away from the Lord of the Covenant."

Even at the present time, the Bahá'ís in all parts of the world maintain an intimate and cordial association by means of regular correspondence and individual visits.

This contact of members of different races, nationalities and religious traditions is concrete proof that the burden of prejudice and the historical factors of division can be entirely overcome through the spirit of oneness established by Bahá'u'lláh.

The general student of religion will not fail to note four essential characteristics of Bahá'í administration. The first is its completely successful reconciliation of the usually opposed claims of democratic freedom and unanswerable authority. The second is the entire absence from the Bahá'í Cause of anything approaching the institution of a salaried professional clergy. The Bahá'í conception of religion is one which combines mysticism, which is a sacred personal experience, with practical morality, which is a useful contact between the individual and his fellow man. In the nature of things, some souls are more advanced than others, and the function of spiritual teaching is given special importance in the writings of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The Bahá'í teacher, however, has no authority over the individual conscience. The individual conscience must be subordinated to the decisions of a duly elected Spiritual Assembly, but this relationship is entirely different in character and results from the relationship of an individual with minister or priest.

The third characteristic is the absence of internal factionalism, that bane of all organised effort, and the sure sign of the presence of spiritual disease. The predominant spirit of unity which distinguishes the Bahá'í Cause in its relation

to the world, making its followers strive for reconciliation rather than partisan victory, creates an internal condition, unlike that which exists in movements which accept partisan victory, in one or another form, as their very reason for being. Such movements can but disintegrate from within; the Bahá'í Movement can but grow.

Significant also is the fourth characteristic, namely, that the Bahá'í Cause has within it an inherent necessity operating slowly but surely to bring its administration into the hands of those truly fitted for the nature of the work. The lesser vision gives way invariably for the larger vision, itself replaced by the still larger vision in due time. The result is an inevitable improvement in the qualities placed at the service of the Cause, until the highest attributes of humanity will be enrolled. In the Bahá'í Cause we are actually witnessing the fulfilment of that strange and cryptic saying "The meek shall inherit the earth."

That the administrative machinery is not an end in itself but merely the means to spread everywhere the light of faith and brotherhood, is frequently expressed by the Guardian in his general letters, and this brief survey may well close with one of those passages:

"*Not by the force of numbers, not by the mere exposition of a set of new and noble principles, not by an organized campaign of teaching—no matter how world-wide and elaborate in its character—not even by the staunchness of our faith or the exaltation of our enthusiasm, can we ultimately*

hope to vindicate in the eyes of a critical and sceptical age the supreme claim of the Abha Revelation. One thing and only one thing will unfailingly and alone secure the undoubted triumph of this sacred Cause, namely, the extent to which our own inner life and private character mirror forth in their manifold aspects the splendour of those eternal principles proclaimed by Baha'u'llah."

Horace Holley.

EXCERPTS FROM BAHA'I SACRED WRITINGS

We desire but the good of the world and the happiness of the nations; yet they deem us a stirrer-up of strife and sedition worthy of bondage and banishment. . . That all nations should become one in faith and all men as brothers; that the bonds of affection, and unity between the sons of men should be strengthened; that diversity of religion should cease, and differences of race be annulled—what harm is there in this?. . . Yet so it shall be; these fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away, and the " Most Great Peace " shall come. . . . Is not this that which Christ foretold?. . . Yet do we see your kings and rulers lavishing their treasures more freely on means for the destruction of the human race than on that which would conduce to the happiness of mankind. . . These strifes and this bloodshed and discord must cease, and all men be as one kindred and one family.—*Baha'u'llah.*

The root of all knowledge is knowledge of God, Glory be to Him! and this knowledge is impossible save through His Manifestation.—*Baha'u'llah.*

O Son of Man! Upon the tree of effulgent glory I have hung for thee the choicest fruits, wherefore hast thou turned away and contented thyself with that which is less good? Return then unto that which is better for thee in the realm on high.

O Son of Spirit! Noble have I created thee, yet thou hast abased thyself. Rise then unto that for which thou wast created.

O Son of the Supreme! To the eternal I call thee, yet thou dost seek that which perisheth. What hath made thee turn away from Our desire and seek thine own?

O Son of Being! Bring thyself to account each day ere thou art summoned to a reckoning; for death, unheralded, shall come upon thee and thou shalt be called to give account for thy deeds.

O Son of the Supreme! I have made death a messenger of joy to thee. Wherefore dost thou grieve? I made the light to shed on thee its splendour. Why dost thou veil thyself therefrom?

O Son of Spirit! With the joyful tidings of light I hail thee: rejoice! to the court of holiness I summon thee; abide therein that thou mayest live in peace for evermore.

O Son of Spirit! The spirit of holiness beareth unto thee the joyful tidings of reunion; wherefore dost thou grieve? The spirit of power confirmeth thee in His cause; why dost thou veil thyself? The light of His countenance doth lead thee; how canst thou go astray?

O Son of Man! Wert thou to speed through the immensity of space and traverse the expanse of heaven, yet thou shouldst find no rest save in submission to our command and and humbleness before Our Face.

O Son of Man! Should prosperity befall thee, rejoice not, and should abasement come upon thee, grieve not, for both shall pass away and be no more.

O Son of Man! Thou dost wish for gold and I desire thy freedom from it. Thou thinkest thyself rich in its possession, and I recognise thy wealth in thy sanctity therefrom. By My life! this is My Knowledge, and that is thy fancy; how can My way accord with thine?

O Son of Man! The temple of being is My throne; cleanse it of all things, that there I may be established and there I may abide.

O Son of Being! Thy heart is My home; sanctify it for My descent. Thy spirit is My place of revelation; cleanse it for My manifestation.

O Son of Spirit! The bird seeketh its nest; the nightingale the charm of the rose; whilst those birds, the hearts of men, content with transient dust, have strayed far from their eternal nest, and with eyes turned towards the slough of heedlessness are bereft of the glory of the divine presence. Alas! how strange and pitiful; for a mere cupful, they have turned away from the billowing seas of the Most High, and remained far from the most effulgent horizon.

O Son of Dust! Blind thine eyes, that thou mayest behold My beauty; stop thine ears, that thou mayest hearken unto the sweet melody of My voice; empty thyself of all learning,

that thou mayest partake of My Knowledge; and sanctify thyself from riches, that thou mayest obtain a lasting share from the ocean of My eternal wealth. Blind thine eyes, that is, to all save my beauty; stop thine ears to all save My word; empty thyself of all learning save the knowledge of Me; that with a clear vision a pure heart and an attentive ear thou mayest enter the court of My holiness.

O Bond Slave of the World! Many a dawn hath the breeze of My loving-kindness wafted over thee and found thee upon the bed of heedlessness fast asleep. Bewailing then thy plight it returned whence it came.

O Son of Earth! Wouldst thou have Me, seek none other than Me; and wouldst thou gaze upon My beauty, close thine eyes to the world and all that is therein; for My will and the will of another than Me, even as fire and water, cannot dwell together in one heart.

O Befriended Stranger! The candle of thine heart is lighted by the hand of My power, quench it not with the contrary winds of self and passion. The healer of all thy ills is remembrance of Me, forget it not. Make My love thy treasure and cherish it even as thy very sight and life.

Alas! Alas! O Lovers of Worldly Desire! Even as the swiftness of lightning ye have passed by the beloved One, and have set your hearts on satanic fancies. Ye bow the knee before your vain imagining, and call it truth. Ye turn your eyes towards the throne, and name it a flower. Not a pure breath have ye breathed, nor hath the breeze

of detachment been wafted from the meadows of your hearts. Ye have cast to the winds the loving counsels of the Beloved and have effaced them utterly from the tablet of your hearts, and even as the beasts of the field, ye move and have your being within the pastures of desire and passion.

O Son of My Handmaid! Be not troubled in poverty nor confident in riches, for poverty is followed by riches, and riches are followed by poverty. Yet to be poor in all save God is a wondrous gift, belittle not the value thereof; for in the end it will make thee rich in God, and thus thou shalt know the meaning of the utterance, "In truth ye are the poor," and the holy words; "God is the all-possessing" shall even as the true morn break forth gloriously resplendent upon the horizon of the lover's heart, and abide secure on the throne of wealth.

O Children of Vainglory! For a fleeting sovereignty ye have abandoned My imperishable dominion, and have adorned yourselves with the gay livery of the world and made of it your boast. By My beauty! All will I gather beneath the one-coloured covering of the dust and efface all these diverse colours save them that choose My own; and that is purging from every colour.

O Son of Justice! In the night-season the beauty of the immortal Being hath repaired from the emerald height of fidelity unto the Sadratu'l-Muntahá, and wept with such a weeping that the concourse on high and the dwellers of the realms above wailed at His lamenting. Whereupon there

was asked, Why the wailing and weeping? He made reply: As bidden I waited expectant upon the hill of faithfulness, yet inhaled not from them that dwell on earth the fragrance of fidelity. Then summoned to return I beheld, and lo! certain doves of holiness were sore tried within the claws of the dogs of earth. Thereupon the Maid of heaven hastened forth unveiled and resplendent from Her mystic mansion, and asked of their names, and all were told but one. And when urged, the first letter thereof was uttered, whereupon the dwellers of the celestial chambers rushed forth out of their habitation of glory. And whilst the second letter was pronounced they fell down, one and all, upon the dust. At the moment a voice was heard from the inmost shrine: "Thus far and no farther." Verily we bear witness to that which they have done and now are doing.

The mystic and wondrous Bride, hidden ere this beneath the veiling of utterance, hath now, by the grace of God and His divine favour, been made manifest even as the resplendent light shed by the beauty of the Beloved. I bear witness, O friends! that the favour is complete, the argument fulfilled, the proof manifest and the evidence established. Let it now be seen what your endeavours in the path of renunciation will reveal. In this wise hath the divine favour been fully vouchsafed into you and unto them that are in heaven and on earth. All praise to God, the Lord of all Worlds.—Baha'u'llah.

Amongst the proofs demonstrating the truth of this Revelation is this, that in every age and Dispensation, when-

ever the Invisible Essence was revealed in the Person of His Manifestation, certain souls, obscure and free from all wordly entanglements, would seek illumination from the Sun of Prophethood and Moon of Divine Guidance; and would attain unto the Divine Presence. For this reason, the divines of the age and those possessed of wealth, would scorn and scoff at these people. Even as He hath revealed concerning them that erred: "Then said the chiefs of His people who believed not, 'We see in thee but a man like ourselves; and we see not who have followed thee except our meanest ones of hasty judgment, nor see we any excellence in you above ourselves; nay, we deem you liars.'" They cavilled at those holy Manifestations, and protested saying: "None hath followed you except the abject amongst us, they who are worthy of no attention." Their aim was to show that no one amongst the learned, the wealthy, and the renowned believed in them. By this and similar proofs they sought to demonstrate the falsity of Him that speaketh naught but the truth.

In this most conspicuous Dispensation, however, this most mighty Sovereignty, a number of illumined divines, of men of consummate learning, of doctors of mature wisdom, have attained unto His Court, drunk the Cup of His Divine Presence, and been invested with the honour of His most excellent favour. They have renounced, for the sake of the Beloved, the world and all that is therein.

All these were guided by the light of that Sun of Divine Revelation, all confessed and acknowledged His truth.

Such was their faith, that most of them renounced their substance and kindred, and cleaved to the good-pleasure of the All-Glorious. They laid down their lives for thier Well-Beloved, and surrendered their all in His path. Their breasts were made the target for the darts of the enemy, and their heads adorned the spears of the infidel. No land remained which did not drink the blood of these embodiments of detachment, and no sword that did not wound their necks. Their deeds, alone, testify to the truth of their words. Doth not the testimony of these holy souls, who have so gloriously risen to offer up their lives for their Beloved that the whole world marvelled at the manner of their sacrifice, suffice the people of this day? Is it not sufficient witness against the faithlessness of those who for a trifle betrayed their faith, who bartered away immortality for that which perisheth, who gave up the Kawthar of the Divine Presence for salty springs, and whose one aim in life is to usurp the property of others? Even as thou dost witness how all of them have busied themselves with the vanities of the world, and have strayed far from Him Who is the Lord, the Most High.

Be fair: Is the testimony acceptable and worthy of attention of those whose deeds agree with their words, whose outward behaviour conforms with their inner life? The mind is bewildered at their deeds, and the soul marveleth at their fortitude and bodily endurance. Or is the testimony of these faithless souls acceptable and worthy of attention, these souls who breath not but the breath of sel-

fish desire, and who lie prisoned in the cage of their idle fancies? Like the bat of darkness, they lift not their head from their couch except to pursue the transient things of the world, and find no rest by night unless they labour to advance the aims of their sordid life. Immersed in their selfish schemes, they are oblivious of the Divine Decree. In the day-time they strive with all their soul after worldly benefits, and in the night-season their sole occupation is to gratify their carnal desires. By what law or standard could men be justified in cleaving to the denials of such small-minded souls, and in ignoring the faith of them that have renounced, for the sake of the good pleasure of God, their life, and substance, their fame and renown, their reputation and honour?

With what love, what devotion, what exultation and holy rapture, they scarificed their lives in the path of the All-Glorious! To the truth of this all witness. And yet, how can they belittle this Revelation? Hath any age witnessed such momentous happenings? If these Companions be not the true strivers after God, who else could be called by this name? Have these Companions been seekers after power or glory? Have they ever yearned for riches? Have they cherished any desire except the good pleasure of God? If these Companions, with all their marvellous testimonies and wondrous works, be false, who then is worthy to claim for himself the truth? By the righteousness of God! Their very deeds are a sufficient testimony and an irrefutable proof unto all the peoples of the earth, were men to ponder in their hearts the mysteries of Divine

Revelation: "And they who act unjustly shall soon know what a lot awaiteth them!"

Consider these martyrs of unquestioned sincerity, to whose truthfulness testifieth the explicit text of the Book, and all of whom, as thou hast witnessed, have sacrificed their life, their substance, their wives, their children, their all, and ascended unto the loftiest chambers of Paradise. Is it fair to reject the testimony of these detached and exalted beings to the truth of this pre-eminent and glorious Revelation, and to regard as acceptable the denunciations which have been uttered against this resplendent Light by this faithless people, who for gold have forsaken their faith, and who for the sake of leadership have repudiated Him Who is the First Leader of all mankind? This, although their character is now revealed unto all people who have recognized them as those who will in no wise relinquish one jot or one tittle of their temporal authority for the sake of God's Holy Faith, how much less their life, their substance, and the like,—*Baha'u'llah.*

O thou Remnant of God! I have sacrificed myself wholly for Thee; I have accepted curses for Thy sake; and have yearned for naught but martyrdom in the path of Thy love. Sufficient Witness unto me is God, the Exalted, the Protector, the Ancient of Days!—*The Bab.*

Me thinks I heard a Voice calling in my inmost being: "Do thou sacrifice the thing thou lovest most in the path of God, even as Husayn, peace be upon him, hath offered up his life for My sake." And were I not regardful of this

inevitable mystery, by Him in Whose hand is my soul even if all the kings of the earth were leagued together they would be powerless to take from me a single letter, how much less could those servants are worthy of no, how attention, and who verily are of the outcast! That all may know the degree of my patience, my resignation and self-sacrifice in the path of God.—*The Bab.*

The Holy Manifestations who have been the sources or founders of the various religious systems were united and agreed in purpose and teaching. His Holiness Abraham, Moses, Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus, Muhammad, the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, are one in spirit and reality. Moreover each Prophet fulfilled the promise of the one who came before Him and likewise each announced the one who would follow. Consider how His Holiness Abraham foretold the coming of Moses and Moses embodied the Abrahamic statement. His Holiness Moses prophesied the Messianic cycle and His Holiness Christ fulfilled the law of Moses. It is evident, therefore, that the Holy Manifestations who founded the religious systems are united and agreed; there is no differentiation possible in their mission and teachings; all are reflectors of reality and all are promulgators of the religion of God. The divine religion is reality and reality is not multiple; it is one. Therefore the foundations of the regilious systems are one because all proceed from the invisible reality; but the followers of these systems have disagreed; discord, strife and warfare have arisen among them, for they have forsaken the foundation and held to that which is but imitation and semblance.

Inasmuch as imitations differ, enmity and dissension have resulted.—*'Abdu'l-Baha.*

Each divine revelation is divided into two parts. The first part is essential and belongs to the eternal world. It is the exposition of divine truth and essential principles. It is the expression of the love of God. This is one in all the religions, unchangeable and immutable. The second part is not eternal; it deals with practical life, transactions and business, and changes according to the evolution of man and the requirements of the time of each prophet.—*'Abdu'l-Baha.*

Now in this world of being, the Hand of Divine Power hath firmly laid the foundations of this all-highest Bounty and this wondrous Gift. Gradually whatsoever is latent in the innermost of this Holy Cycle shall appear and be manifest, for now is but the beginning of its growth and the dayspring of the revelation of its Signs. Ere the close of this Century and of this Age, it shall be made clear and manifest how wondrous was that Springtide and how heavenly was that Gift.—*'Abdu'l-Baha.*

The Universal Educator must be at the same time not only a material, but also a human and spiritual educator; and he must possess a supernatural power so that he may hold the position of a divine teacher. If he does not show forth such a holy power, he will not be able to educate, for if he be imperfect, how can he give a perfect education? If he be ignorant, how can he make others wise? If he be

unjust, how can he make others just? If he be earthly, how can he make others heavenly?—

Christ in His blessed day in reality only educated eleven men; the greatest of them was Peter, who, nevertheless, when he was tested, thrice denied Christ. In spite of this, the Cause of Christ subsequently permeated the world. At the present day Bahá'u'lláh has educated thousands of souls who, while under the menace of the sword, raised to the highest heaven the cry of " Ya Bahául'Abhá." . . .

Now consider the influence of the sun upon the earthly beings: what signs and results become evident and clear from its nearness and remoteness, from its rising or its setting. At one time it is autumn, at another time spring; or again it is summer or winter. When the sun passes the line of the Equator, the life-giving spring will become manifest in splendour, and when it is in the summer solstice the fruits will attain to the acme of perfection, grains and plants will yield their produce, and earthly beings will attain their most complete development and growth.

In like manner when the Holy Manifestation of God, who is the sun of the world of His creation, shines upon the worlds of spirits, of thoughts, and of hearts, then the spiritual spring and new life appear, the power of the wonderful springtime becomes visible, and marvellous benefits are apparent. As you have observed, at the time of the appearance of each Manifestation of God, extraordinary progress has occured in the world of minds, thoughts, and spirits. For example, in this divine age see what development has been attained in the world of minds

and thoughts, and it is now only the beginning of its dawn. Before long you will see that new bounties and divine teachings will illuminate this dark world, and will transform these sad regions into the paradise of Eden. . ..

Muhammad appeared in the desert of Hijaz in the Arabian Peninsula, which was a desolate, sterile wilderness sandy and uninhabited. Some parts, like Mecca and Medina, are extremely hot; the people are nomads with the manners and customs of the dwellers in the desert, and are entirely destitute of education and science. Muhammad himself was illiterate, and the Qu'rán was originally written upon the bladebones of sheep, or on pam leaves. These details indicate the condition of the people to whom Muhammad was sent. The first question He put to them was: "Why do you not accept the Pentateuch and the Gospel, and why do you not believe in Christ and Moses?" This saying presented difficulties to them, and they argued: "Our forefathers did not believe in the Pentateuch and the Gospel: tell us, why was this?" He answered, " They were misled; you ought to reject those who do not believe in the Pentateuch and the Gospel, even though they are your fathers and your ancestors."

In such a country, and amidst such barbarous tribes, an illiterate man produced a book in which, in a perfect and eloquent style, he explained the divine attributes and perfections, the prophethood of the Messengers of God, the divine laws, and some scientific facts.

Thus, you know that before the observations of modern times, that is to say, during the first centuries and down to the fifteenth century of the Christian era, all the mathematicians of the world agreed that the earth was the center of the universe, and that the sun moved. The famous astronomer,* who was the protagonist of the new theory, discovered the movement of the earth and the immobility of the sun. Until his time all the astronomers and philosophers of the world followed the Ptolemaic system, and whoever said anything against it was considered ignorant. Though Pythagoras, and Plato during the latter part of his life, adopted the theory that the annual movement of the sun around the zodiac does not proceed from the sun, but rather from the movement of the earth around the sun, this theory had been entirely forgotten, and the Ptolemaic system was accepted by all mathematicians. But there are some verses revealed in the Qu'rán contrary to the theory of the Ptolemaic system. One of them is: "The sun moves in a fixed place,† which shows the fixity of the sun, and its movement around an axis." Again in another verse, " And each star moves in its own heaven.‡" Thus is explained the movement of the sun, of the moon, of the earth, and of other bodies, When the Qu'rán appeared all the mathematicians ridiculed these statement, and attributed the theory to ignorance. Even the doctors of Islám, when they saw that these verses were contrary to the accepted Ptolemaic system, were obliged to explain them away.

*Copernicus.
†Qu'ran Sura 36.
‡Qu'ran, Sura 36.

It was not until after the fifteenth century of the Christian era, nearly nine hundred years after Muhammad, that a famous astronomer§ made new observations and important discoveries by the aid of the telescope which he had invented. The rotation of the earth, the fixity of the sun, and also its movement around an axis, were discovered. It is thus evident that the verses of the Qu'rán agree with existing facts, and that the Ptolemaic system was imaginary. . . .

Since the Sanctified Realities, the universal Manifestations of God, surround the essence and qualities of the creatures, transcend and contain existing realities and understand all things, therefore their knowledge is divine knowledge, and not acquired; that is to say, it is a holy bounty, it is a divine revelation.

We will mention an example, expressly for the purpose of comprehending this subject. The most noble being on the earth is man. He embraces the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms; that is to say, these conditions are contained in him to such an extent that he is the possessor of these conditions and states; he is aware of their mysteries and of the secrets of their existence. This is simply an example, and not an analogy. Briefly, the universal Manifestations of God are aware of the reality of the mysteries of beings, therefore they establish laws which are suitable and adapted to the state of the world of man; for religion is the essential connection which proceeds from the realities

§Galileo.

of things. The Manifestation, that is the Holy Law giver, unless he is aware of the realities of beings, will not comprehend the essential connection which proceeds from the realities of things, and he will certainly not be able to establish a religion confortable to the facts and suited to the conditions. The Prophets of God, the universal Manifestations, are like skilled physicians, and the contingent world is like the body of man; the divine laws are the remedy and treatment. Consequently, the doctor must be aware of, and know, all the members and parts, as well as the constitution and state of the patient, so that he can prescribe a medicine which will be beneficial against the violent poison of the disease. In reality, the doctor deduces from the disease itself the treatment which is suited to the patient, for he diagnoses the malady, and afterwards prescribes the remedy for the illness. Unless the malady be discovered, how can the remedy and treatment be prescribed? The doctor then must have a thorough knowledge of the constitution, members, organs, and state of the patient, and be acquainted with all diseases and all remedies, in order to prescribe a fitting medicine.

Religion, then, is the necessary connection which emanates from the reality of things; and as the universal Manifestations of God are aware of the mysteries of beings, therefore they understand this essential connection, and by this knowledge establish the Law of God. (Excerpts from " Some Answered Questions.")—*'Abdu'l-Baha.*

True civilization will unfurl its banner in the midmost heart of the world whenever a certain number of distin-

guished sovereigns of lofty aims—the shining exemplars of devotion and determination—shall, for the good and happiness of all mankind, arise with a firm resolve and clear vision to establish the cause of Universal Peace. They must make the cause of Peace the object of universal consultation, and seek by every means in their power to convene a conference of the governments of the world. They must conclude a firm treaty, and establish a Covenant the provisions of which shall be sound, clear and definite. They must promulgate it to the world, and cause it to be ratified by the unanimous decision of the whole human race.

This great and noble undertaking—the real source of the tranquillity of all the world—should be regaded as sacred by all who dwell on earth. All peoples and nations should bend their efforts to insure the stability and permanence of this supreme Covenant. In his universal treaty the limits and frontiers of all nations should be definitely fixed, the principles underlying the relations of governments expressly stated, and all inter-governmental agreements, relationships and obligations ascertained and clearly set forth.

In like manner, the size of the armaments of every government should be strictly limited, for if the preparation for war and the fighting forces of any government advance and increase, the suspicions of other governments aroused. The fundamental principle underlying this solemn Agreement should be so fixed that if one of the governments of the world should later violate any one of

its provisions, all the governments on earth would arise to reduce it to utter submission, nay the human race as a whole should resolve with every power at its disposal to destroy that government. Should this greatest of all remedies be applied to the sick body of the world, humanity will assuredly recover from its ill and will remain safe and secure for all time. . . .

A few, unaware how much man can do if he will but try, regard this matter as really impracticable, and even beyond the range of human ability. Such is not the case, however. On the contrary, thanks to the unfailing grace of the Lord, to the loving-kindness of the favoured of God, to the extraordinary endeavours of wise and capable souls, and to the thoughts and ideas of the peerless leaders of the times, nothing whatsoever can be regarded as unattainable. Nothing sort of the highest endeavour and the firmest determination can possibly achieve this end. Many a cause, which past ages have regarded as a mere dream and fiction of the fancy, has proved in these days to be practicable and easy of achievement. How then can this most great and lofty cause—the day-star in the firmament of true civilization and the cause of the glory, the advancement, the well-being and the success of all humanity—be regarded as an impossibility? Of a surety, the day will come when its beauteous light shall illuminate the assemblage of man. ('Abdul'l-Bahá: *The Secret of Divine Civilisation.*)

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